The
COMMONWEAL

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THE WAR, as we write, is virtually over. This is a fact in itself so moving and compelling that any comment rings hollow, falls wholly short of what hundreds of millions of hearts are feeling, hundreds of millions of minds are thinking. And yet in these matters there is at least a certain liturgy to be observed, a certain ritual to be uttered.

The fighting, thanks be to God, is over, which means that the killing and maiming is over. Let us all be determined that the hating also is over, not only the hatred of us, over which we have no control, but whatever hatred is lodged within us, over which we *have* control, and for which we are, each of us, strictly answerable.

The war is done, and we have more than we know to be thankful for. Mothers and fathers, wives and sweethearts are freed of the ugly and gnawing burden of anxiety. That undefinable strain that has kept us all under its tension is relaxed. For these things not only Americans but our enemies and our allies are thankful without prompting. But here is something more than a liturgy: We, Americans, have something immeasurably greater than personal relief to claim our thankfulness, something carrying with it terrible responsibility. We emerge from the most devastating conflict the world has ever known very nearly unscathed. Our fields are furrowed only by the plough, our factories are intact. Compared to other nations, we have lost but a handful of our men. We are thus the most powerful people on earth. And for a brief time, at least, we alone possess the most awful weapon yet devised.

In our joy and triumph, in our freedom from the burdens of these years, we must remember this. We must look forward soberly, and we must examine our conscience.

Horror and Shame

TWO MONTHS ago (June 22) we were writing about poison gas. We said: "To the Orient we are bringing the latest inventions of our civilization. There is only one we have not brought. It is gas. If we use that we will have brought them all. Gas is no worse than flame. It is only that it is one more weapon. The last one we have to use. Until we invent a new one." And then we said: "The time has come when nothing more can be added to the horror if we wish to keep our coming victory something we can use—or that humanity can use."

Well, it seems that we were ridiculous writing that sort of thing. We will not have to write that sort of thing any more. Certainly, like everyone else, we will have to write a great deal about the future of humanity and the atomic bomb. But we will not have to worry any more about keeping our victory clean. It is defiled.

There were names of places in Europe which from the early days of the war were associated with a German idea that by disregarding the rights of civilians you could shorten a war. These names of places—Rotterdam, Coventry—were associated, and seemed likely to be associated in men's minds for a great number of years, with a judgment of German guilt and German shame. There was a port in the Pacific which sheltered American naval power. It was attacked by air without warning and the name Pearl Harbor was associated, and seemed likely to be associated for many years, with a Japanese idea that you could win a war by attacking the enemy before declaring war on the enemy. The name Pearl Harbor was a name for Japanese guilt and shame.

The name Hiroshima, the name Nagasaki are names for American guilt and shame.

The war against Japan was nearly won. Our fleet and Britain's fleet stood off Japan's coast and shelled Japan's cities. There was no opposition. Our planes, the greatest bombers in the world flew from hard won, gallantly won bases and bombed Japanese shipping, Japanese industry and, already, Japanese women and children. Each day they announced to the Japanese where the blows would fall, and the Japanese were unable to prevent anything they chose to do.

Then, without warning an American plane dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima.

Russia entered the war. There was no doubt

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before or after Russia entered the war that the war against Japan was won. An American plane dropped the second atomic bomb on Nagasaki.

We had to invent the bomb because the Germans were going to invent the bomb. It was a matter of avoiding our own possible destruction. We had to test the bomb and we tested it in a desert. If we were to threaten the use of it against the Japanese, we could have told them to pick a desert and then go look at the hole. Without warning we dropped it into the middle of a city and then without warning we dropped it into the middle of another city.

And then we said that this bomb could mean the end of civilization if we ever got into a war and everyone started to use it. So that we must keep it a secret. We must keep it as sole property of people who know how to use it. We must keep it the property of peace-loving nations. That is what we said about the atomic bomb—together with odds and ends about motors the size of pin points which would drive a ship three times round the world—that is what we said about it, after we had used it ourselves. To secure peace, of course. To save lives, of course. After we had brought indescribable death to a few hundred thousand men, women and children, we said that this bomb must remain always in the hands of peace-loving peoples.

For our war, for our purposes, to save American lives we have reached the point where we say that anything goes. That is what the Germans said at the beginning of the war. Once we have won our war we say that there must be international law. Undoubtedly.

When it is created, Germans, Japanese and Americans will remember with horror the days of their shame.

Reconversion Prospect

THE NATION appears perennially to be in a state of unpreparedness. We are no more ready today for the gigantic task of demobilization than we were for an attack on Pearl Harbor. It is natural enough to look round for a scapegoat—one or several. Fingers are pointing at the members of Congress, who went off on a long vacation with so critical a part of their vital task still undone. After another ten days or so vacation our legislators are in fact returning to Washington on the instance of President Truman. Still others are blaming the Army or the Navy or the various war boards which have held off the plant, the manpower or the critical materials which were needed to start up the reconversion process in any major fashion. Weren't a lot of these leaders in on the secret of the atomic bomb or in the know about Russia's plan to join up in the Far East at the eleventh hour? If recriminations are to be indulged in, however, must not a good part of the blame rest squarely upon the great bulk of the American people, who despite numerous published warnings which made the prospect clear, failed to exert sufficient pressure in the halls of Congress to assure at least a comprehensive blueprint ready for VJ day.

There is some point to fixing much of the blame upon the great bulk of the American citizenry. For if they are not sufficiently aroused to the perils of the peace as regards the domestic American economy, private interests can throw too many wrenches while public representatives deal with other things.

Consider the immediate prospects. Five million war workers to be discharged within sixty days of VJ day; three million soldiers or more to be released within the coming year; federal expenditures for goods and services to be cut 75 percent. And to meet the immediate prospect very little: private construction companies have dwindled in numbers and have no appreciable pool of peacetime contracts; only one-half the public works conservatively estimated as needed are in the blueprint stage; set-up for the disposal of surplus property (especially of the materials essential for reconversion and civilian manufacture) is highly unsatisfactory; the national War Mobilization and Reconversion Director places his hopes on urging discharged war workers (and managers of civilian plants which are opening) to register with the United States Employment Service and in urging further that plants which have had orders cancelled to cancel at once any orders which they in turn have for critical raw and semi-finished materials; the announcement of a "simple and direct" WPB blueprint for national reconversion.

The number of legislative measures now required for any adequate attack on the reconversion problem is genuinely startling. It is admitted all round that a considerable interval must elapse between stoppage of war orders and the transformation of many plants to peacetime purposes. Those who are honest will also admit that certain areas of our country, notably the Northwest, are unable to employ anywhere near their present war-worker contingent in civilian production. Thousands of workers will be stranded, local relief rolls will suddenly be taxed beyond capacity and vast segments of considerable purchasing power will abruptly be wiped out. How can the President, Congress and the American people evade the issue? More extended and more substantial unemployment compensation must be provided for this critical interval. How can we permit such action to be delayed any longer?

Another vital sector demanding immediate attention is the reorganizing of our surplus property disposal procedure. It cannot be overemphasized for citizens generally that the great

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danger in the period just ahead is that a big depression spiral will be set in motion by the very slowness of the reconversion process. If the priorities system is too summarily and too universally removed, big companies will capture the *matériel* needed to restart manufacturing. These corporations with their vast resources, and chances to recover large chunks of what they paid out in war taxes, are under no such impulsion to start work again as are smaller concerns with little capital and dependent upon rapid turnover for mere survival. If, then, the all-important pace of reconversion is to be maintained, little business must have every opportunity to acquire what it needs to speed the day of reconversion; such provision is lacking in the present set-up.

These are only two of the leading items in our current unpreparedness. THE COMMONWEAL will have occasion to advert to others in subsequent issues. After-war lethargy would inevitably rob the American people of many of the fruits of their long-sought military victory.

Cultural Change

WHAT are we going to try to do with Japan? Remarkably few Americans, including those who make it their business to inform the rest of us on Far Eastern affairs, have any conception of the tremendous implications involved in this question. Almost none of us fully realize the significance of a war between two totally different cultures, having only the most shallow and superficial connections. If such a war ends in the old fashioned way, without any attempt on the part of the victorious party to impose any cultural change upon the defeated enemy—and this has been the pattern of substantially all the wars in which Japan has been involved during the last century—the implications are unimportant. But if, as is clearly the case now, the victor in such a conflict intends so to impose his will upon the defeated as to effect a deep psychological change, the picture is vastly different.

We should be deceiving ourselves entirely were we to view the Japanese social and cultural climate as being in any way analogous to the climate of nazi Germany. Superficially, on the surface, there have been certain resemblances. But these resemblances are essentially accidental. Japanese culture has been until now a dynamic and viable going concern within very much the same framework for at least a thousand years. However much we may dislike it, however little we find to sympathize with in it, we are blind if we do not admit this elementary fact. Of course it would be utterly ridiculous to attempt in a few hundred words even the most superficial of descriptions of this culture. Suffice it to say that substantially all the evidence available indicates that it has been a culture spiritually at peace with itself and acceptable to the vast majority of the Japanese community, a culture in which considerable happiness was available to the ordinary citizen, even though in terms to us quite incomprehensible. There were, of course, a certain number of "liberal" Japanese, some of whom have been imprisoned, some assassinated. Principally these were men and women who had come under a strong Western influence. Numerically they amounted to nothing.

Contrast this with the situation in Germany, where free Western traditions are certainly as old as the traditions which produced nazism. Consider the number of Germans whom Hitler had to lock up in concentration camps or intimidate by other equally successful if more subtle means before he could be at all certain of internal security. Admittedly there are ancient roots for that aspect of German culture which the rest of the West dislikes and will fight when it becomes aggressive; there are similar roots in all the Western countries. The point is that in Japan the *only* historic sources are the sources of a single cultural stream which we are dedicated to cast into a new channel—a channel through which no water has *ever* flowed. The more one studies Japan's history, the more one realizes how great a unity is her society. Indeed so uniform is the pattern of Japanese social history that it could tolerate centuries of the most savage clan and civil warfare—and still survive. For conflicts of interest—bitter as they were—took place within a definite code so universally accepted that it has occurred to no one to rebel against the code, and it is that code which we think we can destroy by means of military occupation, an Allied high command, and—what we love to promise everyone—free elections.

It is very nearly a safe bet that a genuinely free election in Japan at any time in the foreseeable future would yield precisely the system we think we can so easily extirpate. Moreover, we must remember that the Japanese has always excelled at the management of secret societies, of clandestine movements. We could execute every Japanese army and navy officer, every member of the economically dominant class, and there would still be Japanese fanatically loyal to their traditional ideals, completely willing to sacrifice themseves and their families to the preservation of those ideals by every means their ingenuity may suggest.

The intent of these remarks is not to convey the idea that a more acceptable Japan is impossible, but to make us reflect upon the course we have chosen, recall an old saying about sitting on bayonets, and realize that we shall have to offer the Japanese an example, to them visibly better than their own, if we are ever really to accomplish what we say we would accomplish.

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Missouri Valley Authority

America's greatest single peace project

Edward Skillin, Jr.

THOSE familiar with it call the Missouri River "Big Muddy," or our own Yellow River. From its sources in the Wyoming and Montana mountains to its juncture with the even vaster Mississippi, just above St. Louis, it covers 2,460 miles; its basin, including its tributaries, embraces more than one-sixth of our continental United States. It flows first in a vaguely easterly direction and then southeasterly (through ten states); the Missouri Valley is the home of nearly 7,000,000 people. Near its source the Missouri is 13,000 feet above sea level and it drops all the way to 400 feet in the course of its 2,460 miles.

There seems to be a marked distinction between the Upper and Lower Valleys. In the former, which roughly would extend to parts of Wyoming, Montana, Colorado, the Dakotas, the great need is irrigation, while in the Lower Valley, parts of Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas and Missouri, farmlands primarily require protection from destructive floods. As a result of different situations and different needs, the peoples of the two areas have for years had difficulty in understanding each other's problem. But those in the Upper Valley are now said to have arrived at the realization that they cannot secure the legislation they want without the support of their Lower Valley neighbors. Though strangely enough the reverse is not yet true.

The Missouri Valley is an area which has been richly endowed by the Creator. In its upper basin and nearby lies the world's largest supply of cheap bituminous and sub-bituminous coal, along with oil and oil shale in abundance. It contains the world's largest supply of phosphates —the most important element for building up the soil—and, curiously enough, that means virtually all the national supply of phosphates outside the 10 percent found in the Tennessee Valley. For all the abuse which it has received, the farmland of the Missouri Valley is still among the richest in the United States and in the world, provided only that there is sufficient water. The chief products of this richly endowed area are wheat, lumber, sheep and cows, copper, iron, lead, manganese, zinc and natural gas.

Yet with all these natural advantages the Valley is definitely on the downgrade. Incomes, tax receipts and industrial production are dropping, and since 1940, 1,000,000 people have left the area. There are few Americans, even these days, who do not remember the dust bowls of a decade and more ago in the Upper Valley, while year after year we hear of floods which ruin thousands of acres of rich farmland nearer the river's mouth. It is said that 1,800,000 acres of land—worth a billion dollars—are subject to the ravages of this mighty stream. Indeed 400,000,000 tons of priceless fertile topsoil are annually washed away by the Missouri and its tributaries; that is equivalent to one ton per cultivated acre annually. And when the Missouri goes on a rampage it often changes its course and thus wreaks havoc on homes and communities for miles around. Even industrial plants are subject to its torrents, incurring $150,000,000 worth of damage from 1942 to 1944. The damage wrought by drought may be gathered from the total overall figure of cost to our government (chiefly the Federal Government) of $1,246,557,000 in the past decade. At times "Big Muddy" looks slow and peaceful, but it is aroused all too periodically.

One would think that a river of this size would afford great facilities for cheap transportation. However, above Kansas City and especially above Sioux City, Iowa, river traffic has up to now been chiefly the dredges and barges of Army engineers (I have no data on rowboats, skiffs and other small, flat-bottom craft). A drop from 13,000 to 400 feet, even when stretched out over thousands of miles, would seem to present great opportunities for developing water power. But such is not the case. Iowa, with its black velvet soil and wealthy hog raisers is the only one of the Missouri Valley states in which more than half the farms have electricity. Even the comparatively rich Dakotas are inferior to the oft-blasted State of Mississippi in consumption per person of electric power.

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All that ought to add up to sufficient evidence of the urgent need that something be done by and for the inhabitants of the Missouri Valley. Unlike the Tennessee area, which is blessed by a heavy rainfall, the most pressing requirement in the Missouri Basin is irrigation. That has long

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been the concern of the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Reclamation under the ubiquitous Secretary Ickes. Its engineers estimate that dams could be constructed which would irrigate 4,760,000 acres of new and restored farmland, plus another half million acres which are now inadequately irrigated. This would raise the value of the land in question from $7.00 to $25.00 an acre; it would create 53,000 new farms averaging 90 acres apiece and involving 212,000 people. The Bureau would for one thing establish 15 reservoirs in the heart of the northern dust-bowl of Wyoming and the Dakotas. Then the enormous Fort Peck Reservoir in eastern Montana, which was built by Army engineers to store water for navigation purposes, could also be used for irrigation purposes. It does not even supply any revenue for the State of Montana to this day. The Bureau plans storage dams on the lower main stream also—in all one and a half times the 2,000,000 acre-feet storage estimated as needed to hold off floods.

Another plan, ascribed to Colonel Pick of the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, would include the setting up and strengthening of levees from Sioux City, Iowa, down to the Missouri's mouth. In the past thirty years the Army engineers have in fact spent over $300,000,000 in an effort to deepen the channel for navigation. Yet they have not yet succeeded in developing anything more than a six foot channel part of the way (the standard channel for navigation is nine feet deep), and it is charged that they have aggravated damaging floods. One reason is that by slowing up the river's flow they have allowed more silt to be deposited on the bottom and thus raised the surface of the stream. It is also claimed that the amount of water specified in the Army engineers' clause in the Rivers and Harbors Bill, to provide the navigation channel in the lower river, would consume the entire flow of the Missouri River as it has averaged during the past ten years. Nothing would be left for all-important irrigation upstream. The Engineers have always favored low dams on the lower river; the Reclamation Bureau wanted the dams nearer the source—irrigation is what they're interested in.

Despite this wide divergence in interests and objectives, these two agencies, impelled by the impending creation of a Missouri Valley Authority, similar to the Tennessee Valley Authority, have for the moment submerged their differences deep in the Missouri mud. They have agreed upon a plan, or the skeleton of a plan, which would provide for irrigation, navigation, flood control and hydro-electric power. There is little in their past accomplishments to warrant much confidence in this new alliance. The building up of the Missouri Basin cannot be accomplished, either, in solderings and patches. Regardless of state and county lines, the Valley is a physiographical and economic unit. It requires over-all planning by a single agency with headquarters in the region itself and branches throughout that region. That points to the strongest single argument for the creation of a Missouri Valley Authority: the universally recognized success of the Tennessee Valley Authority in the past twelve years.

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When the TVA was set up in 1933, one of its primary purposes was to serve as a working model for other American regions. In twelve long years of depression, peace and war, it has proved to the hilt its effectiveness for the common well-being. How could anyone demand further evidence? A few indications appear in its last annual report, which has just been released. The TVA currently supplies 550,000 consumers with cheap electricity—and each one of them uses twice as much juice as he bought from private power companies. During the last fiscal year TVA paid out in lieu of taxes to States and Counties some $790,0000 more than private systems in the area used to pay in taxes. TVA also supplied phosphates to 31,500 demonstration farms in 28 states. It saved the city of Chattanooga by holding the crest of a threatened flood six feet below what it would have been otherwise. And chiefly from its sales of electric power it turned back to the United States Treasury a net income of more than $14,000,000. One way of realizing what the Authority has done for the Valley in a business way is a statistic for 1941, the last year in which electrical appliances could be sold to private citizens: in that year the average sale per customer in the Tennessee Valley amounted to $50.38, compared with the average of $7.21 the nation over and $6.43 in the Southeast, the year before. (See TVA article, COMMONWEAL, July 6.)

But what the TVA has done cannot possibly be indicated adequately in terms of figures of any kind. It has created an expanding economy in an area which is far less richly endowed with natural resources than the Missouri Valley and where conditions before the project were far worse than those along the Missouri right now. To appreciate what the TVA has done one must visit the Valley in person and talk with workers and businessmen, farmers and county agents, and indeed members of the TVA staff itself. There one senses a new spirit—a feeling of partial accomplishment and well-founded hope. No doubt partly responsible for this is the fact that TVA headquarters at Knoxville are right in the field, that the Authority is largely independent of Washington (except for full reports, authorizations and annual appropriations), and that the idea of decentralization is carried into the entire

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region. In other words, the citizens who take an active part in the operation of the Authority through hundreds of local, State and private agencies develop a lively consciousness of democracy and solidarity. This is, I believe, one of Director David Lilienthal's fondest convictions. I believe that that means more to him and many of his associates than the transformation of the Tennessee Valley from a poverty-stricken region to one of the nation's richest retail sales areas.

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Be that as it may, it is high time that the American people utilized the experience gained in twelve years of TVA operation to make possible the development of other feasible areas according to similar techniques. The Missouri Valley, which is some thirteen times the size of the Tennessee Valley in area, is the most prominent of the projects of this sort which are now being considered. As intimated above, the primary importance it assigns to irrigation and the presence of other divergent factors mean that it would not be advisable to attempt to follow the technical aspects of the TVA plan too slavishly. What must be followed for the sake of the common good is the over-all regional approach, with full cooperation with all existing private, state, regional and federal agencies, so that no useful experience will be lost and no agency which can contribute will be neglected. The closer the war draws to a close, the more urgent is the need for major projects to help tide over reconversion. It is conservatively estimated that an MVA construction program would provide 100,000 jobs in construction work and 50,000 more in manufacturing equipment for the next five years. And the possibility of setting up an expanding economy à la TVA in so vast a region—through new farms, new industries, cheap power, and transportation—makes that prospect even more important. And that possibility of stimulating well-rounded economic expansion indicates that the TVA technique could also be applied in the Arkansas and Columbia River Valleys (Grand Coulee Dam). Georgia and South Carolina are already considering something similar for the Savannah River Valley, while legislation has already been proposed to bring the Cumberland River Valley (Kentucky and Tennessee) into the TVA system itself.

It was a year ago that a bill setting up a Missouri Valley Authority on TVA lines was first proposed in Congress by Senator Murray of Montana. This bill was revised last February and again presented to the Senate (S.555). An identical bill has been introduced in the House by Representative Cochran of Missouri (HR 2203). The Murray Bill has been referred to three committees: it was turned down flat by the Commerce Committee and a like fate is believed to await it at the hands of the Irrigation Committee; hopes for the bill reside in a favorable reporting out by the Senate Agriculture Committee, which once approved the TVA.

Even in midsummer the lines are being drawn for an all-out battle. It is a contest between powerful private interests and those upholding the common good. The opposition is well organized. In the forefront are the private utilities. This is why. In the Missouri Valley, where power is generated and sold by such utilities, even those consumer cooperatives which are organized under the Rural Electrification Administration have to pay from two to three times what the TVA charges its wholesale distributors. Or to put it in another way. If you take the Missouri Valley outside of Montana, you will find that commercial and industrial users there have to pay three times what business consumers of electric power have to pay in the Tennessee Valley, while home users have to pay twice as much. The full-page "ad" which 167 light and power companies, "self-supporting and taxpaying businesses," ran in the August 6 issue of *Life* significantly enough urges that if dams, etc., are built the new power provided "should be sold to existing power systems." For I learned at the Chattanooga Municipal power board that the big profits in electricity come rather from distribution to the consumer than from production. (TVA distributes through quasi-independent municipal power boards and rural electric cooperatives.) Also the "ad" says, "Government in *any* business endangers *all* business."

It is said that some 85 percent of the private (public?) utilities industry has banded together to fight the MVA. Last spring it was reported in the St. Louis papers that nearly a dozen highly paid New York promotion men had descended upon the Missouri Valley to drum up opposition. The *National Union Farmer* reports that this powerful group is setting up a national association of power companies to lobby against MVA in Washington. It mentions as spokesmen, C. Hamilton Moses of New York, Chairman of the Board of Arkansas Power and Light, which is a subsidiary of Electric Bond and Share, and Purcell L. Smith of Chicago, of the Middle West Corporation.

Second only to the power trust in its opposition to MVA is a group of 30 "water development" associations. The acting president of its coordinating committee is Roy Miller of Corpus Christi, Texas, president of the Intracoastal Canal Association of Texas and Louisiana, who has had great success as a lobbyist in Austin for the Texas Gulf Sulphur Company, primarily in holding its state taxes down, and who also knows his way round Washington. The term, "water develop-

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ment association," is elastic enough to include the Pittsburgh Coal Exchange, an industry which fears the competition of hydro-electric power. A strong friend of this group is said to be Senator Overton of Louisiana.

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Another segment in the opposition includes the political bosses of a number of the cities which would be affected by the establishment of a Missouri Valley Authority. They have for too long enjoyed the gravy from municipal power revenues to accept anything like a TVA setup, where revenues from municipal power distribution must be used to reduce rates, expand facilities or retire indebtedness. There are also the Army Engineers and Reclamation Bureau of Secretary Ickes, which were mentioned above. A Mississippi Valley Association and the National Reclamation Association have joined in, too. Finally there is a Western Reclamation Association made up of large-scale commercial farmers who seek to overturn the provision in the Reclamation Act put in at the instance of Theodore Roosevelt and continued in the Murray Bill, that farmers benefiting from government-provided irrigation must own 160 acres or less. These men are dead-set against continuing such encouragement of the establishment of family-type farms, particularly when they might have a chance to buy up large sections of the new land which would be opened up by adequate irrigation.

Facing this formidable array of wealth and expert lobbyists is a largely unorganized group of MVA well-wishers. Although the project has had a certain mead of encouragement in a wide range of socially-minded periodicals, it is the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* and the *St. Louis Star-Times* which are in the van of the supporting journals. There is also the AFL building trades councils of the Missouri Valley, which has announced its backing of the Murray Bill. One of the strongest forces is the National Farmers Union, whose official publication, the *National Union Farmer,* of 3501 East 46th Avenue, Denver 16, Colorado, makes a special point to "keep-Up-to-Date on the MVA." At Omaha, Nebraska, on July 6 and 7, a permanent organization was formed to support the Murray Bill. At one of the organization meetings State Senator Claude B. Ricketts of Missouri, who had just returned from visiting the TVA about the same time that I was there, spoke of the "necessity for concentrated, coordinated authority over the diverse problems and the diverse areas across the numerous state and county lines." At present the Missouri Valley Association is seeking 1,000,000 signatures favoring the Murray Bill in the ten Valley States for the purpose of presenting it to Congress. Significantly enough, the first signer was Elmer Benson, chairman of CIO's Political Action Committee and former Governor of Minnesota. Finally, the warmest MVA supporters will be found among the great majority of those who have seen something of the TVA in person.

The only way this second group can be victorious is through widespread popular pressure from those outside the Valley. A recent Washington visitor tells me that the only constructive measure of any compass which has a chance of passing Congress in the near future is the Murray Bill—or something similar. Its opponents can be counted on to throw in everything including the claim that since one day we shall be able to utilize atomic energy for worthy purposes there is today no longer any need for new projects providing cheap hydro-electric power. Scientists, of course, do not talk this way. And power is not the foremost consideration in the Missouri Valley.

It is hard to say where the smaller businessmen of the Valley as a whole stand in regard to the creation of the Authority. The fact that they oppose it in large numbers seems indicated, however, by the hostility of all the Governors of the affected States except for Governor Hunt of Wyoming. I suspect that a similar situation faced the advocates of the TVA before it came into being. Yet today all the Governors of the Tennessee Valley States are more than favorable toward an institution which has done so much for their respective constituents already and promises so much more for the future; they say explicitly that there has been nothing to interfere with "states rights" in TVA operation. The businessmen in Decatur, Alabama, whom I met were as conservative if not more so than the general average of American business executives. I was not impressed favorably by the working conditions in their plants. Yet once they had realized what flood control, cheap power, cheap navigation facilities and expanding purchasing power were doing for their businesses and for their community, they became as strong advocates of TVA as the most socially-minded "liberal." To make the Missouri Valley businessmen conscious of the proposed MVA in such terms would seem to be the biggest job in selling that idea throughout the Valley. Opposition among the farmers is not so widespread. In a poll they are currently conducting in the area the Farmers Union has found that all but 7 out of 500 locals want an MVA of the type envisaged in the Murray Bill.

The completely demonstrated success of TVA has given this nation an unparalleled opportunity. And unprepared as we are for reconversion, we are sorely in need of economically expansive factors on the scale of MVA. Perhaps even more do we need further proof of the constructive powers latent in our political democracy.

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Poets of the Resistance

Hope and despair in prison camps

John L. Brown

EUROPEAN poetry in the past years has been a poetry of man imprisoned. Jean Cassou (under the pseudonym of Jean Noir) wrote some of the greatest of modern French sonnets while he was in jail near Toulouse. They were later published clandestinely as "33 Sonnets Written in Solitary Confinement" by the famous Midnight Editions. Louis Aragon, pursued both by the German and Vichy police, composed his ballads of resistance in the nationwide prison created by Nazi occupation. And in the prisoner of war camps in Germany where over a million Frenchmen were held, there were poets who sang, behind the barbed wire, a *romancero* of hope and despair which is one of the great poetic and human documents of the war.

We know now with a terrible concreteness what the conditions in those camps were like. Yet in spite of everything, some of the prisoners kept up a life of the spirit: they founded camp universities, organized lectures, concerts, expositions; read, discussed, wrote. Out of the prison camps have come three collections of poetry invaluable if one seeks to understand the mentality of those menaced by the "barbed-wire illness." They are the two special volumes of Pierre Segher's review *Poésie* entitled "Poètes Prisonniers" and the "Cahier des Prisonniers" in the series *Cahiers du Rhône,* a Swiss publication founded by Albert Béguin.

Both *Poésie* and the *Cahiers du Rhône* played an important rôle in the intellectual life of France since 1940. Side by side with political oppression and material suffering flourished an intellectual activity which is astonishing in its richness, courage, and vitality. "Young reviews" sprang up everywhere, especially in the non-occupied zone, and found a wide circle of readers and contributors. Representative of these are *l'Arbalète* and *Confluences* of Lyon; *Toutes Aures; Poésie* and several others.

Poésie began as a little magazine of army verse, which Seghers founded when he was mobilized in 1939. He called it *Poètes casqués* (Poets in helmets). After the defeat of 1940, he was demobilized, went home to the little town of Villeneuve-lès-Avignon, and decided to continue publication. He was convinced of the necessity for the survival of poetry, especially in a time of national discouragement and despair. He wanted to encourage, as he said, a poetry that was "à hauteur d'homme," poetry to the measure of man. He took as the motto of his magazine "Et de sa blessure fut la fleur vive" (and from the wound came the living flower). *Poésie* became a rally point for some of the best elements in French letters: Jean Paulhan, Eluard, Aragon, Emmanuel, Jean Cassou, Elsa Triolet. Poetry was no longer considered as a means of pure esthetic delight or of private evasion; it became a weapon, a weapon against despair, as Eluard called it, "les armes de la douleur." The best French writing of the past five years can be found in these so-called semi-clandestine reviews of the non-occupied zone. In spite of Vichy censorship and German pressure, they continued to produce numbers which are models of artistic worth and typographical beauty.

Albert Béguin, the editor of the *Cahiers du Rhône,* is the type of the "true European." From the safety of Neuchâtel, he was determined to make an effort to protect the great traditions of European humanism, which the war was destroying. His series was printed (and superbly printed) in Switzerland, but enjoyed a wide clandestine distribution in France; it contained many authors who were strictly forbidden by the Germans and the Vichy authorities — Maritain, Aragon, Eluard, Jean Wahl.

Both Seghers and Béguin had the idea of gathering together the poetry and the prose by Frenchmen imprisoned in Germany. As Béguin writes in the preface to his volume: "We wanted to know what those 'immobilized men' in the camps were thinking; we wanted to know in what moral conditions they lived; we wanted to form a more complete picture of their existence than that given by newspaper accounts . . . We wanted to have a more direct contact with the hopes and the suffering of those men who will have such a tremendous rôle to play in the reconstruction of our society."

The collections truly form a *romancero.* They have the quality of folk poetry—a directness of theme and of manner, a ballad sense, a semi-anonymity, an invitation to be learned by heart. Many of the names in these volumes have the advantage of being completely unknown. These

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men wrote, not for mere diversion, not for technical experimentation, not as a means of self-display. Poetry for them was quite simply a means of salvation, a means of grace, a method of surviving the "life in suspense" they were going through.

They speak of the desperate boredom of their daily life, of the round of small duties that made up their existence. One group of three sonnets, "Captivity," by Robert Genaille, conveys all the unpretentious and often pathetic poetry of intimate things. He describes for his wife the hopeless task of trying to keep clean in the camp, trying to do laundry without hot water, without soap, hanging the dingy-grey washing on the barbed-wire to dry. In another sonnet, depressed by the inhuman ugliness of the barracks, he recalls the beauty and the order of the things which had surrounded their life together: "the mystery of a vase on the table, where a few flowers were unfolding, of a chair, a cushion, a table, a glass . . ."

André Maurel, who died in a prison camp in his middle twenties, asked always for hope, hope even in the midst of the hopelessness about him. For the convict serving a specific term always has a concrete hope of release on its expiration. The prisoner of war has no idea of how long he must wait. His sentence is indefinite. Maurel, in a touching piece called "Prière au Père Noel," describes what he would like for Christmas: "I hope he brings me some biscuits, a sweater, a can of monkey-meat (that's what the French call corned beef) and especially, since you need lots of it, a good dose of Hope. And if you've got any in your bag, Père Noel, give me escape." His "Supplement to the Canticle of Saint Francis" enumerates the things for which he is thankful: for bread and (rather less so) for the soup, "the thin, sad food of our very sad troop"; for "our dear brothers, books"; for "our sister, music"; for letters, "for the quickened beat of the heart when they are delivered, bringing with them the perfume of France"; but most of all he gives thanks for "our sister, Hope." Long spells of despair, however, were inevitable. Maurel speaks of them in his last poem, written a few days before his death. It is entitled "Lent":

> We have lived through a long Lent,
> So terribly long, before this real one;
> But Lord if all this only
> Were of some use . . .
>
> Nous avons fait un long carême
> Si long, si long avant le vrai . . .
> Mais Seigneur si cela servait
> A quelque chose quand même.

Walking endlessly back and forth in the narrow, grassless enclosure bounded by barbed wire, all of them dreamed of liberty, of freedom. René Menard's "Others Have Liberty" is characteristic. "Others have the liberty to wander freely here and there, but my whole world is a rectangle of skinned soil, more stark and inhuman than the desert landscapes of my childhood nightmares." Those on the outside have the liberty to love: "Others have the liberty to embrace tenderly their wives and a woman's flesh is sweet for free men . . ." Others have the liberty to watch their sons grow up, "to build a dream while watching a child sleep."

★

Some of the contributors to "Poètes Prisonniers" have since obtained wider notice. Jean Garamond, for instance, whose "Images de l'Homme Immobile" were published in *Cahiers du Rhône*. André Frénaud has achieved recognition with his "Rois Mages," written while in captivity, and with his "Mystères de Paris" which has just appeared. Luc Decaunes, the son-in-law of Eluard, whose poetic career had begun brilliantly before the war, has returned to France with a large body of new work and a strengthened talent. Philippe Dumaine has become a regular contributor to *Poésie* and the author of two volumes, of which the more recent is "Francs-Tireurs du Temps." Gallimard has published the latest book of the brilliant Jean Marcenac, "Le Cavalier de Coupe." But how many of the most intense lines in "Poètes Prisonniers" were written by young men who died unknown and have remained unknown. And we must realize that the Nazi censors never permitted the most powerful of the poetry of the camps to reach the outside world. What these volumes offer us is undoubtedly pale in comparison with those poems which never succeeded in passing beyond the barbed wire—or with the poems which were never written down at all.

The long days and nights of captivity provoked thought on fundamental issues. A new belief in man affirmed itself. Written in 1941, "The Sleep of Man" by Yves Brainville foreshadows the spirit of the days of the liberation of Paris. Brainville affirms:

> When a man wants to fight, he can fight
> Day after day and mile after mile,
> With vermin on his body and his soul in his eyes;
> He can hold out better than any machine.
>
> Quand ca veut lutter, un homme, ca peut lutter
> Des jours et des jours, des lieues et des lieues,
> Avec la vermine au corps et l'âme dans les yeux.
> Ca peut tenir mieux que n'importe quelle machine

In "Beyond Silence" Nicolas Raiewsky, whose form and content owe much to Péguy, states:

> "Finally it is man alone who counts."

But in order to "hold out better than any machine" man must preserve his belief in his whole humanity, in his unique nature and destiny. Otherwise, according to Brainville:

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When he renounces this belief, when he surrenders to the shadow
He falls in a mass, like a tree.

With this integral humanism came a reaction against the exclusive domination of the rational and the intellectual. Jean Marcenac, who escaped from prison in 1942 and made his way back to the South of France to join the maquis, expresses this idea in "Coup de Grâce":

The square where we used to dance in summertime
Was a square called
Square of Reason.
We used to dance there lightheartedly
For Reason itself is lighthearted.
But the dance today is heavy like our sorrow.

La place où nous dansions l'été
C'était une place nommée
Place de la Raison
Nous y dansions le coeur léger
Car la raison elle-même est légère
La danse d'aujourd'hui est lourde comme notre peine.

Pierre-Henri Simon treats the same theme of the insufficiency of the unaided intellect in his "Song of the One and the Many":

I see the immediate cause
But the two ends of the chain
Fall into the depths of night.

Je vois la cause prochaine,
Mais les deux bouts de la chaîne
Tombent au fond de la nuit.

He is aware of that verbalism, of that worship of words and formulae which is sometimes present in the French spirit and which has so often obscured the meaning of simple and obvious things:

The wasp which torments you
Is born of the empty, sunlit air,
Of the words the mind invents.
But every word lies
When compared with the Thing.
So marry the curve
Of capricious reality.
Geometer! Don't let excessive "purity"
Lead you to prefer the blueprint
To the simple evidence of the eyes.

La guêpe qui te tourmente
Nait dans l'air vide et doré
Des mots que l'esprit invente
Mais il n'est mot qui ne mente
A la chose comparé.
Donc, épouse la courbure
Du réel capricieux.
Géomètre! Ame trop pure.
Ne préfère pas l'épure
Au don simple des yeux.

But the theme which recurs most often under the most varied forms is that of living "in suspense." The strands of barbed wire suffice to annul all the world outside, as Robert Klaerr observes in *Nocturnes*:

A few strands of barbed wire are enough
To wipe out the memory of cities
And the intoxication of streets.
To black out the highways
And the mysterious villages.

Il suffit d'un barbelé
pour que n'existent plus
les villes
et l'ivresse des rues,
pour que s'éteignent les grandes routes
et les villages mystérieux.

The entire poem is a remarkable evocation of the void of the camps, of the absence and emptiness which undermine morale even more than active physical suffering. Together with this feeling of void comes the sense that behind the barbed wire time ceases to have any content or meaning. Raymond Darmane, in a diary entitled "Seasons of the Spirit," remarks: "Just as there is a sailor's time, I think there is a prisoner's time, a time without rhythm, an empty pocket in the time of men to whom life brings unexpected risks and unexpected joys. Time without wings, unable to lift up the days. Here the calendar does not have its usual palpitation. The feeling of 'before' and 'after' disappears. If we were told that time was going backward we wouldn't be surprised." The prisoners were marooned in time, while their loved ones were swept along, swept away. And they were constantly preoccupied by this fear of the physical and psychological distances created by separation. André Porquet distilled all this in his "Land of Stone":

I belong to a hard land where the dying observe their death,
See their friends forget and their wives fade away;
Life goes on outside my prison walls
And the living wave to me in a friendly fashion
While drawing steadily away. And as in dreams
My arms are tied to my sides and I cannot cry out.

Je suis du pays dur des morts qui voient leur mort
leurs amis oublier et leurs femmes partir.
Je vois de ma prison continuer la vie.
Et les vivants me font des gestes amicaux
En s'éloignant de moi. Et comme dans les rêves
mes bras restent liés et mon palais sans voix.

The more perceptive of the prisoners were acutely conscious of the danger of living for years "outside of time." Darmane analyzed this in "Seasons of the Spirit": "Attention! We live here in the illusion of immobility. We think that we are anchored outside of time, outside of life. But time goes on for the others, and the life of the world continues without us. The day will come when we shall disembark in a world which will look entirely different, and where we shall not recognize anyone. People will make an effort to smile at us. They will make believe that they recognize us. But if we return without any other baggage except our aged faces and our suffering, we shall be good for nothing except to drag our bitterness after us."

The prisoners were caught between two conflicting fears. On the one hand they were afraid to lose contact with the world outside, where time had real content, where they had house and family, friends and professional standing. On

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the other, it hurt almost intolerably to keep alive a memory of the past and hope for the future while enduring a present which seemed possible only under the anesthesia of forgetfulness. Many of these poems plead for unconsciousness. Jean Audard in his prison diary, "Days Without Glory," speaks of "forgetfulness which protects the heart":

> Keep away from yourself.
> Leave memory in peace.
> Let the past sleep on.

René Menard speaks in desperation of "the image of my son, effaced by 1300 nights of absence." André Masson's "La Vie profonde" is a touching tribute to his wife who "alone understands the secret words of my soul, the only one for whom my voice will never be silent." Many, like Gaston Criel, evoke their country "France, France smelling of poplar trees," the discreet harmonies of Touraine, the sun and sea and olive trees of Provence. Some find escape in reading "behind the barbed wire the poems of Ronsard" while others, like Jean Dupoux, call up pictures they have loved—he remembers Utrillo "who spoke to me of the richness of autumn, of gold and yellow leaves; Utrillo spoke to me of Paris growing green under old ashes . . ." The more conventional of these poems idealize home in a way that can result only in disillusion as the prisoners come back to the hungry, impoverished, and disorganized France of 1945. This disillusion inevitably extends to personal relations as well. A long period of separation has often transformed the wife into a "far away princess" who bears little relation to the real woman who has struggled bitterly to keep alive, who has changed, grown indifferent perhaps, or bitter, or unfaithful in the course of five years.

Thousands of former prisoners are returning to France every day. These poems that they wrote during their captivity are a means of understanding them, of establishing contact with them once again. People everywhere who have experienced the exile and the terrible solitude of our world today will recognize and be moved by these voices.

Communications

San Gabriel, Calif.

TO the Editors: De Valera of Eire employed a fine phrase in "Could he not have it in his heart . . .?" The context is of no significance. It is the feeling behind the word that should appeal to men.

Why could we not have it in our hearts to think of the enemy as martyrs? Why could we not have it in our heart to stop hating?

Must we measure the life, given to us to live, by the pound of bacon, the quart of wine, bread and butter, pie and cheese? Why so much ado in praise of our way (favored by land, clime, young soil)?

It might be better perhaps to have less to eat and drink, and poorer housing, and less raiment, *and* be nearer the human heaven which is bordered by compassion, mercy, forgiveness, tolerance.

PAUL SONNEBORN.

The Screen

Sense of Mystery

NOT ALL the movies that feature a murder in their pulsating plots are necessarily of the current hard-boiled school. In fact three new items this week almost seem old fashioned because their leading characters aren't tough at all. However, there still pervades these pictures an awesome feeling of uneasy mystery; because cinema, even when not at its best, is successful in making us edgy about the fate of the characters we watch—including those characters whose lives are not on the up-and-up.

Definitely not on the up-and-up are the Quincys in *"Uncle Harry,"* a morbid little study about the three remaining members of a gone-to-seed New England family. To make everything seem normal, the film opens in an "Our Town" manner with an introduction to Corinth, its Main Street, etc., etc., until we meet the once-honored Quincys who are now living in genteel poverty and who reveal, during the course of the picture, the kind of people they really are. Harry (George Sanders) makes commonplace designs on materials at the mill. His homelife is even more miserable and boring—thanks to his own lack of gumption and his two over-solicitous, bickering sisters. Hester (Mayna Macgill), petty, whining and living in the past, could perhaps be handled; but Lettie (Geraldine Fitzgerald) is really vicious and uses her pretended illness as a cover-up for her unnatural attachment to her brother. Comes a girl (Ella Raines) into Harry's middle-aged life, a really nice girl whom he loves, and he sees an escape from his sisters. But Lettie fakes a heart attack and wrecks his plans for marriage. Then Harry goes into action with a little poison in Lettie's cocoa, which by mistake Hester drinks. Needless to say, this is not exactly a pleasant movie, but its production by Joan Harrison and its performances under the intelligent direction of Robert Siodmak have a fascinating and disturbing quality that keeps one spellbound. The last part of the picture (which the critics have been asked not to reveal) goes completely to pieces and almost ruins the whole thing. While Thomas Job's play, on which Stephen Longstreet based his script, was no great shakes, at least it had the courage of its convictions and left Harry doomed to a lifetime of bitter remorse. I don't know whether the Hays Office or the film's makers were responsible for the disgusting, wishy-washy ending. But even this soft finale could not destroy the strong scenes between Fitzgerald and Raines and the macabre sequence in which Sanders sings "And When I Die" while he plans his sister's murder.

The first half of *"Love Letters"* has that same moving

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sense of mystery that was so effective in "Rebecca." William Dieterle, who directed the pictures, and Lee Garmes, in charge of its photography, must have realized that they were handling a plot that runs like a stenographer's pipe dream, so they used cast and camera to hypnotize us, and for a while they succeed. Alan, an English officer, writes a series of love letters for a fellow officer and then is disturbed because he realizes that his letters have won the girl, whom he does not know, to his friend who is an irresponsible wolf. Later, when Alan is convalescing in England, he is even more greatly disturbed by his awakened love for this girl whom he meets under the strangest circumstances. She is now a victim of amnesia and remembers nothing of her life with her drunken husband or of having killed him. Alan and the girl fall deeply in love; but after their marriage their happiness is not complete, for little by little the girl's past comes back to her. The finale, when it finally comes, is full of last-minute solution, gushing tenderness and a very rosy future for these star-crossed lovers. Hal Wallis's production excels however in the film's disquieting moodiness, in portraying Alan's displeasure with himself and in catching the atmosphere in the lonely Essex house where the unhappy man comes to recuperate. Ayn Rand wrote her lush screenplay from Chris Massie's purple-tinged novel, but the cast rises above plot. While Jennifer Jones is not entirely convincing as the amnesia victim (she is too glassy-eyed and hysterical at times for any man to consider her as a mate) her performance contrasts effectively with the tensely sincere portrayal of Joseph Cotten, who permits no ham. The supporting cast is excellent, especially Ann Richards, Cecil Kellaway and Gladys Cooper.

"Lady on a Train" is somewhat disappointing as a thriller too; perhaps because everyone tried too hard with Deanna Durbin's first mystery film. It opens with an intriguing idea from a story by Leslie Charteris: its heroine, an avid reader of detective novels, looks out of her train window as she is approaching Grand Central Station and sees a murder committed right before her very eyes. Of course no one will believe her; the police say New York is full of murders on a Saturday night. So she goes to her favorite fiction writer (David Bruce) and he's pretty scornful too. But when she sees the murdered man in a newsreel and the story comes out that he died in an accident, she decides to get to the bottom of things. Her chase leads her to a Long Island estate, where she is mistaken for the victim's mistress by a strange collection of people, and then to a nightclub where Deanna, amidst the violence, tosses off a couple of songs. Considering all the fights and murders that take place here, the film should have been called "Mayhem in a Nitery." The solution is rather pale, in that the least obvious of all the suspects is the guilty one. Chief among these are such good performers as Dan Duryea, Ralph Bellamy, George Coulouris, Elizabeth Patterson and Samuel S. Hinds. The picture's main fault is that Director Charles David wasn't sure of his technique. He manages to get some wonderful suspense in the scenes showing Deanna creeping around a gloomy house while sinister Coulouris follows her, but he dissipates these with some forced humor and double takes by Edward Everett Horton. Deanna's singing "Silent Night" while reclining on a satin-covered bed is pure, tasteless corn. Brightest moments center on David Bruce: mangled, blood-covered after a vicious fight, he stares at Deanna with puppy-love eyes as she sings "Night and Day"; and later, just before the finale, he stupidly gives the gun to the murderer instead of using it himself. All of which should prove that mystery story writers know nothing about life and crime.

PHILIP T. HARTUNG.

The Labor Movement

Labor in England and Here

ONCE AGAIN American Labor seems to be unanimous. As one man with two hands it applauds the stunning victory of the British Labor Party. Even the warring sub-divisions see in it a boost not only for labor, but for their own particular faction. The Communists hail the defeat of Churchill as a blow to the red-baiters. The Socialists, Social Democrats and Liberals point to the refusal of the Labor Party to make common cause with the English CP and interpret this as an endorsement of their own policies. Catholic trade unionists are a little worried about the left-wing Laskis and the mild Marxism, but inclined to think the gains more than outweigh the losses.

Certainly this is true if one considers only the profits that will accrue to the workingman here in the United States. Just from the standpoint of morale it is a tremendous shot in the arm. It is the voice of the future speaking—or singing—to labor in the tender words, "I belong to you." It is also a handy weapon for immediate use, a powerful lever to pry the Truman administration out of the quicksand into which it seemed to be settling more than a little to the right of center. At the opening hearings on the Full Employment Bill Senators Wagner and Murray were quick to use the Churchill collapse as a storm signal for American politicians and a testimonial to the value of "jobs for all." Which is exactly as it should be. The same lever will and should be used for better unemployment benefits and the social security, health, housing and interracial laws that are now long overdue.

Detailed analysis of the various forces within the British Labor Party will have to wait for some better qualified authority. George Catlin, however, has already reassured us on the largely inflated importance of the fellow-traveling Professor Laski, chairman-for-one-year of Labor's national executive. It is also well known that Attlee, Bevin and Morrison have been vigorously anti-communist and that the latter was the minister who outlawed the English *Daily Worker* in 1941 with the remark, "We're not going to have any fifth-column nonsense in this country."

The British Labor Party has always been dominated by its trade union wing, which makes up the bulk of the membership, and the Trades Union Congress is still firmly in the hands of a pretty respectable bunch of Englishmen. As R. J. Thomas, head of the American auto workers, remarked on his return from the World Labor Congress in London last February: "The English labor leaders may talk radical, but they always vote conservative."

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And yet it would be foolish to underestimate the importance of the Party's left-wing, which includes in addition to Laski such capable operators as Sir Stafford Cripps, Aneurin Bevan, the fiery Welshman from the miners' union, CP stronghold; and Emanuel Shinwell, champion of the Greek EAM. And it should be remembered that the last Party Congress defeated the motion for a united front with the Communists by a very narrow margin. As in this country, the strength of the English comrades is measured more in terms of fellow traveling than of pure CP confession.

★

But if the English elections demonstrate that the future, barring accidents, belongs to labor, how soon can we expect the owner to take possession in this country? The answer is simple and vague—as soon as labor becomes the dominant factor in the Democratic Party, its natural home, and elects its own choices to the Presidency and a majority of seats in both House and Senate.

Some may think that labor, in the shape of PAC and Company, came pretty close to taking over the Chicago convention last year. But appearances were deceiving. Wallace, after all, was already Vice President and the heavy favorite in all the polls. It was only a question of re-electing the popular choice. And even that proved too much for PAC. One good reason was that while the spotlight of publicity highlighted every move, every gesture of the dramatic Mr. Hillman, the AFL's less dramatic Mr. Green was sitting quietly in a box telling the large number of AFL delegates, and other friendly souls, to vote for Harry Truman. It would be interesting to know if Brother Green ever reflects on the fact that if he had thrown his weight for Wallace, he might not now be finding it necessary to threaten the Truman administration with the news from England.

Divided as it is by this gloomy chasm, American labor at the present time is politically hamstrung, hand-cuffed and hornswoggled. And the chasm is, if anything, getting wider and deeper. The AFL leaders can't seem to forgive the CIO for being right on the issue of industrial unionism. In their petty vindictiveness they sulk and pout and point to their superior numbers as proof of moral righteousness. They have now sunk to the level of sabotaging the Labor-Management Charter, rather than sit down at the same table with the CIO, surely one of the stupidest crimes in the history of man. Perhaps when, if ever, the present AFL leadership is replaced by more intelligent, progressive men, perhaps when, if ever, the CIO builds up an equal or superior membership, some kind of labor unity will be possible. Until one or the other dream comes true, the chasm will probably remain.

Meanwhile Sidney Hillman is destroying his own effectiveness, and the effectiveness of PAC, by dousing himself all over with red paint in his continued alliance with the Communists. Until he removes himself from New York's Labor Party (no resemblance to England's) or is removed from the chairmanship of PAC, it is doubtful if the latter organization has a Chinaman's chance of capturing the confidence of the American workingman.

Meanwhile too the AFL dodders along with its ancient refusal to endorse presidential candidates (except LaFollette in 1924), a policy about as far removed from the facts of life as the four-horse chariot from the demands of modern transportation. It is further paralyzed—physically, mentally and morally—by the presence in its executive council of two unashamed agents for the Republican Party, Matthew Woll and Bill Hutcheson. And on the threshold looms the ominous figure of another Republican, John L. Lewis, the lonesome lion.

No, the gentlemen in the fashionable clubs and the paneled offices needn't be too alarmed at the news from London. American labor isn't taking over for a few years yet. 1948? No. 1952? Probably not. Maybe 1956, with luck, and the undeserved grace of God.

JOHN C. CORT.

Descartes and Richard Crashaw

M. WHITCOMB HESS

IN 1937, on the tercentenary of the appearance of Descartes's "Discours de la Méthode," which was published in 1637, the French government issued a commemorative stamp. Many books were printed, also, on the French philosopher that year and all the philosophical journals paid various tributes to the man who inaugurated modern philosophy. Philosophers from all over the world assembled in Paris for the Ninth International Congress which was named *Congrès Descartes* in honor of the tercentenary. In his address of welcome to the delegates Paul Valéry spoke of the "magnificent and memorable Ego" of his seventeenth-century compatriot; and it was Descartes's accent on the individual that served to set him apart from earlier philosophers. Indeed in my own paper for the *Journal of Philosophy* which issued a special Descartes number[1] I wrote on "The Individualism of Descartes," but, though I did not wholly realize the fact then, my appreciation of the quality of Descartes's individualism was for its background. And this background was the scholasticism in which he himself had been nourished in the Jesuit school at La Flèche but which his followers, in accepting his individualistic doctrine, discarded.

[1] Vol. XXV, pp. 169-188

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But, though it has been only since the printing of my appreciation of Descartes a few years ago that my own eyes have been opened fully to the fatal error inherent in Cartesianism in its stress on the individual thinker, one of Descartes's fellow philosophers, Blaise Pascal, knew precisely what was wrong with it. "I cannot forgive Descartes," he said. "In all his philosophy he would have been quite willing to dispense with God. But he had to make Him give a filip to set the world in motion; beyond this, he has no further need of God."[2] Certainly the French mystic would have condemned Descartes even more if he could have foreseen the feverish egomanic subjectivism that would develop among his followers, particularly in German philosophy in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and reach its peak in the philosophical nihilism and atheism of the twentieth century. Thus Pascal's judgment on his older contemporary will remain when all else but the destructive effects of Descartes's teaching is forgotten. At best Pascal had found him, as he tells us in the sentence-fragment that forms Thought 78, "useless and uncertain."

When Descartes's epoch-making "Discourse" appeared, to startle and waylay so many wayfarers on the road to philosophy, Richard Crawshaw, England's great metaphysical poet, had just passed his twenty-fourth birthday. He was still at Cambridge where he had been given a College Fellowship in 1635; and he had just published a poem against the anti-papal activities in which his father, a Puritan parson of importance, had been a ringleader before his death a decade earlier. In this poem young Crashaw asked

> "What can the poore hope from us, when we be
> Uncharitable even to Charitie,"

and, though not then a Catholic and with doubtless no intention of being one, he excoriated England's Catholic-baiters. What marked Crashaw from the first was his love of truth for its own sake, and this love grew by what it fed on. Alone among England's "divine poets," as those of the seventeenth-century are sometimes called, Richard Crashaw came home to the faith of his fathers in the year 1645; and it is this tercentenary that concerns us, for to his contemporaries it meant a break with just such "progressiveness" as Descartes was championing, and the French philosopher had, even this early, gained a large following in England and on the continent.

Crashaw's turning to Catholicism was interpreted by some of his associates as a reaction to his father's extreme Protestantism; by others as his answer to the factionalism in English church circles that resulted in the execution of Archbishop Laud in 1645 and was to have further effect in the beheading of Charles I in 1649. But on one point his contemporaries agree—that Crashaw had an unusually unworldly mind. His asceticism and single-hearted devotion to the truths of Christianity are mentioned as outstanding traits by all who knew him, from his poetic Boswell, Abraham Cowley, to the anonymous editor of the famous Crashaw volume, "Steps to the Temple."

And he is the most metaphysical of the metaphysicals, who received their name from Dryden and have been so termed ever since. These metaphysicals lived at the beginning of the Age of Reason (which Descartes had been first spokesman for, by giving it what passed for a philosophical basis); but their intellects, emotions and imaginations remained under the dominance of revealed Christian truth. Like Crashaw's German contemporary, Johann Scheffler (Angelus Silesius) the accent was on the Light, uncomprehended by man's reason, but that by which man may comprehend all other things. Thus we find Scheffler appealing to the "strong Light of Heaven" to enlighten his whole being:

> "Erleucht mir Leib und Seele ganz,
> Du starker Himmelsglanz!"

And in the same manner Crashaw says in his poem of advice to the Countess of Denbigh to "give Faith its day,"

> "Yield then, O yield, that Love may win
> The Fort at last, and let Life in!"

Again in a prayer-book sent a friend, the poet writes at lyrical length of the shield of faith which is prayer—not only a shield but a whole armory:

> "It is the Armory of light,
> Let constant use but keep it bright."

The poet is known to us largely through his beautiful "Wishes" (To His Supposed Mistress) and his lovely, faultless "Hymn to St. Teresa." And is there not poetic justice in the side-by-side immortality, literarily speaking, of Crashaw's lines to his imaginary mistress and those to the actual Spanish saint whose soul so strongly resembles his own? We remember Crashaw also as the composer of the most famous line of Latin ever written by an English author: *Nympha pudica Deum vidit, et erubuit,* occurring in his poem on the miracle at Cana, and the almost equally well-known "incarnational paradox": *Illi non locus est, quo sine nec locus est.*

Sister M. Madeleva has said, "My poems are just my way of saying what I think." Crashaw usually says what he thinks in musical metaphors. In speaking of his devotions in the church of Little Saint Mary's a contemporary wrote that "there he made his nest more gladly than David's swallow neere the house of God." The tribute was given by one who had read and loved Crashaw's poetry in which the image of the nest occurs so often. For he was one of the "wise souls" he speaks to in his poem, "To the Name of Jesus," calling them

> "All ye wise souls, who in the wealthy breast
> Of this unbounded Name, build your warm nest."

In his poetry, too, abound such frequenters of nests as the dove, the eagle, the phoenix, the "self-wounding" pelican, and other symbols of aspects of Christ's and of the Christian's life.

Descartes, as it was said above, inaugurated the rationalist movement that flowered in German philosophy (if

[2] THOUGHTS, Pascal, Translated by W. F. Trotter, Harvard Classics, Vol. 48, p. 33

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"flowered" is the term for a philosophy so pernicious in its results) to dehumanize and dechristianize the entire world order so that global war could be possible. And now, whether we recognize the fact or not, beneath the gigantic military combat rages a greater one between the forces of truth and error. Pope Pius XII has spoken of it as "a great spiritual combat in which the stakes are the construction, nay, the very soul of the society of tomorrow." He has said of this war that it is "a war on the darkness that comes of deserting God . . . a fight for the human race, which is gravely ill." The illness has not suddenly developed among men—it is as old as our race's first disobedience in the Garden of Eden, and it is of the same order.

Descartes's greatness has been called by recent writers "alarmingly Mephistophelean," and it is held by them (as by Pascal at the start) that the founder of modern philosophy maintained a wrong relation between philosophical knowledge and religious truth. However, it was his followers who exalted the human mind over divine revelations, never Descartes whose *cogito, ergo sum* was meant just to show the individual's exemplifying rôle in universal reason. Faith in truth's attainability, to Descartes, was a concomitant of the will's submission to God. Nonetheless his thesis of the supreme value of the individual-knower, philosophically speaking, lent itself to just such a doctrine as his followers developed. His *"je pense, donc je suis"* which Sir John Pentland Mahaffy, the Irish classical scholar, called once "the trumpet-note for the resurrection of the human mind from the death of formalism" has sounded instead in our times more like the witches' word of promise to Macbeth.

But Descartes's philosophy appears in its true light, and not as a sickness of the psyche dating from Eden, only when it is known from the religious-truth side. The trouble with rationalism is that it implies (what Hegel explicitly upheld) that philosophy represents a higher kind of knowledge than religion. The mind may take the seeker to the very door of Faith, but only the will's submission to God and His Truth brings him inside it. This fact Richard Crashaw knew as did Newman, the date of whose conversion is exactly two hundred years later than his own. An Oxford colleague of Newman's, Mark Pattison, said of him that if he had been able to read German he would have been "saved" philosophically, though Pattison, whose spiritual despair is only too evident in his melancholy "Memoirs," was the one who needed the saving. If he could return to this earth to see what his touted German philosophy has done not only to Germany but to the world he might not prize it so highly. Yet the glory of Newman and of Crashaw (and how many other known or unknown Christians through the ages!) is that, for them, the truth needed no test of time.

Harlem Rooftop

Across the roof
Bird-shadows fly;
The flash of glass
Is like a bird;
The singer in the court

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Has made
A song that can't
Unsay the Word.

For wisdom playeth as a fountain
(Those who love her call her play)
She is a cave-trap in the mountain
To those who bridle from her way.

Above the roof
The white bird flies
Along the court
Her shadow runs.

In one light day is born and dies:
The night is dark with many suns.

And wisdom runneth as a flame
Above the rooftops of the mind,
Restoring every day the dead
And leading forth the halt and blind.

Down buildingside
Birdshadows rain,
And glass upflashes
Like a bird.

The singer in the court has made
A song that can't unsay the Word.

ROBERT LAX.

Remembrance

whether you said, "Good-bye!"
or what odd salving sounds
your guilty throat
strained through
your tightened lips—
I didn't hear . . .

or if you closed
the creaking door
with careful quietness,
stilling the censuring cluck
of latch in lock;

or if the echoes
of your busy feet
(that scattered distance on the stairs)
reverberated in my room;

or if I sobbed;
or pianistics sounded overhead;
or curtains flapped;
or people laughed across the hall;
or glasses tinkled in a toast—
I didn't hear . . .

The din of something
bursting in my breast
made hearing
impossible.

MIKE FENLON.

Books of the Week

Economic Democracy and Private Enterprise. Michael O'Shaughnessy. Harper. $2.00.

MR. O'SHAUGHNESSY is a wonderful man. A real, honest-to-goodness businessman, he has for years been spending his energy, brains and courage in a personal crusade for the reform of capitalism along lines more in harmony with Christian principle. His latest effort is "Economic Democracy and Private Enterprise," and it is full of passionate good sense and constructive proposals.

Here is a sample: "It is devoutly to be hoped that the people of this country will not be bamboozled by propaganda inspired by a privileged class, greedy and selfish, intent upon retaining their predominant position in our social and economic order. They have the money and the power to frighten the people with cries of planned economy killing individual initiative, destroying free enterprise, retarding progress through eliminating the incentive of profits to the few. Their cries against regimentation and bureaucracy are not sincere. To them the American way of life means the continuance of their privileges."

Hear, hear! And please pause briefly to consider that this is no professional agitator speaking, no starry-eyed dreamer, no visionary contributor to THE COMMONWEAL, but the editor and publisher of *South American Oil Reports* and *O'Shaughnessy's Oil Bulletin*. He should know.

Mr. O'Shaughnessy wants every working man to make at least $58.00 a week. An excellent idea. (But how are we going to make sure $58.00 can buy $58.00 worth?) He wants "production primarily for use and secondarily for profit." Excellent idea. He wants an economic democracy along the vocational lines laid down by the Popes, with a top Economic Council serving in an advisory capacity to Congress. Excellent idea.

Two criticisms: Phil Murray of the CIO gives Mr. O'Shaughnessy a plug on the jacket, but the latter seems never to have heard of Murray's Industry Council plan, very similar to his own, or to be aware that this plan is being energetically promoted by the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists, notably in Detroit. Secondly, why can't we have a good detailed explanation of why that sick chicken killed NRA and what should be done to prevent the death of another attempt at over-all planning?

JOHN C. CORT.

Immortal Village. Donald Culross Peattie. Chicago. $2.75. (*Limited, signed edition*: $7.50.)

FRANKLY I have not the faintest idea whether this book will be of interest to anyone who does not know the little town of Vence on the French Riviera. Mr. Peattie is a well known writer and the books he has written have been read by a great many people. But he wrote this book in 1929 and had it privately printed in Nice (two hundred copies) and now he has added a pleasantly written preface and has brought the book out in this country with decorative woodblock illustrations by Paul Landacre. The business about having a "limited, signed edition" is a French touch he has retained. (Before the war the French had reached the point of having about six different editions on variously named magnificent papers, and numbered from A to Z, from 1 to 100, with a special edition for subscribers, a special edition for the

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author, a special edition for the author's friends, and so forth—book collecting was something like stamp collecting.)

This little book is a careful history of a little French town from the stone ages to the Revolution and the Empire. It does not make dry reading to one who remembers the way that little town looks on its hill and, of course, anything that has to do with the history of Provence must have extremely romantic associations. Writing it was for Mr. Peattie a labor of love; in those days he was trying to write short stories but, when he had tried long enough, he would put all the plots, the characterization, the dialogue out of his mind, and for the rest of the day, or rather in the quiet evenings, he would write at this history of the town in which he lived. When a book is written that way, even when it is written before an author has found out what he wants to write about for the rest of his life, it is bound to have a peaceful, unpretentious quality. Sometimes such a book is the only book a man writes. Sometimes it is never printed, or, when printed, never read. All over Europe in the provinces, there is the parish priest, the local doctor, the collector of internal revenue, busily engaged in amassing notes—always from secondary sources, always from books which the young men of the university would despise—copying out uncertain references to whatever is the special pride of the locality, a statue with its nose broken off, the village church, the ruined castle on the hill with the goats wandering through the ruined courtyard. And then sometimes the notes finally get into print; at the nearest subprefecture the local printer will get out a paper bound volume. An occasional traveler will find the book and mean to read it; he will carry it away with him, and then there will be a few years when, looking at it on his shelves, he will remember where he bought it, remember the place again and who he was with, the tombstone with the inscription he tried to decipher, the people in the café with whom he spoke. Then something will happen, a war or death, and the books of those travel years will be in a house that is sold, in a trunk that is lost, in a country not ever revisited.

C. G. PAULDING.

Primer For White Folks. Edited by Bucklin Moon. Doubleday. $3.50.

THIS collection of writings, by and about American Negroes, briefly describes their cultural background in Africa, their heritage and achievements in the land which forcibly adopted them, and their long struggle for a fair share in our democracy. As only a mite of the material included in the volume comes from remote sources, and only a little more is in any way difficult to obtain, while most of it is of contemporary origin, one might assume that the majority of readers are already familiar with the facts and points of view presented. After all, Negroes are not a mysterious tribe inhabiting the upper reaches of the Amazon.

They have been living among white Americans 300 years, working for them and working with them, sometimes residing beside them as neighbors; less frequently, associating with them as friends. A primer of interracial relations, addressed specifically to white readers, is neither a compliment to their intelligence nor a tribute to their sense of fair play. After three centuries of contact with Negroes, the anthology implies, white Americans are ignorant of the history, abilities and aspirations of their darker compatriots and refuse to deal justly with them.

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The implication, unfortunately, contains more truth than error.

It is unfortunate, too, that the people most likely to read the book are those least in need of its persuasion. If the volume falls into the hands of only a few uninformed readers, however, or induces a handful of potential Bilbos to shed some of their bigotry, the editor will be well rewarded for his labor. For readers already in possession of the information it contains, and who do not need sermons on tolerance, the volume is a budget of interesting and, at times, exciting reading.

Various types of writing are included in the anthology, historical articles, editorials, episodes from novels, humorous sketches, letters to the editor and short stories: forty-one titles, all told. Among authors represented are Wendell Willkie, W. E. B. DuBois, Dorothy Parker, Richard Wright, Langston Hughes, James T. Farrell and Erskine Caldwell. While those are the most prominent authors whose names appear in the volume, their contributions are not necessarily more interesting than the matter produced by their less eminent colleagues.

The reviewer's preferences, because they are now discoveries, are "The Amistad Mutiny," by Muriel Rukeyser, and "Letter to the *Times*," by Frances Kemble, a famous English actress of the last century. "Mister McGregor," by Andrew Nelson Lytle, is as thrilling a short story as one is likely to find in a hundred, and there is an impish humor in St. Clair McKelway's "The Touchin' Case of Mr. and Mrs. Massa."

Among the articles, the *Fortune* editorial on "The Negro's War," and Earl Brown's analysis of the causes of the Detroit riot, are packed with significant facts, while Willkie's "Citizens of Negro Blood" is a comprehensive survey of the Negro's political status. For a sane, temperate discussion of social attitudes, one rarely encounters anything peer to Margaret Halsey's "Memorandum to Junior Hostesses." THEOPHILUS LEWIS.

Until Summer Comes. F. M. Al Akl. Pond-Ekberg. $3.00.

BOTH of Dr. Al Akl's parents came from a small village in the Lebanon mountains of Syria. He himself was born in Tanta, Egypt, a town of 200,000 inhabitants in the Nile delta, where his family had become wealthy; he thus spent only the summers in the Lebanon. But when it was decided that he should become a doctor, he was sent to Beirut University, founded in 1866 by American Presbyterian missionaries. He learned to admire the Americans and the American way of life, and he came to this country in order to complete his professional training and to develop a medical practice. He became a distinguished physician and a successful surgeon.

This story is an attractive autobiography for his New York colleagues and patients as well as for people from the Near East who like the success story of one of their kind who became wealthy and well known in the New World. The background of Dr. Al Akl's life story is interesting, though his historical data are not always reliable: he even believes that the Phoenicians discovered America and that there are traces of their language and religion in the ruins of the Aztecs.

The feature that adds a more than private interest to the doctor's autobiography is the social consciousness of his human impressions and his medical projects. There is a certain utopian element and a naïve optimism in his

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philosophy of life; he is an admirer of Edward Bellamy; but the conviction that the world needed less preaching and more action guarded him against changing his useful profession for that of an itinerant preacher for doubtful social schemes. He feels that doctors should care more about poverty and squalor that undermine health, instead of neglecting their major responsibility in concentrating on the narrower aspects of their duties. He thinks it incongruous that we fight newly transgressing empires so that the Abyssinians and Filipinos may be freed and that, at the same time, we help to preserve the *status quo* in India. It is the dynamism and the virility of his enthusiasm for a better world that will gain a larger audience for his book. MAX FISCHER.

The Fates Are Laughing. W. P. Crozier. Harcourt. $3.00.

ROMAN LIFE from the latter part of Tiberius's reign to the death of Caligula is the scene of this novel. It is an endlessly interesting scene, for it is not only a time of great historic importance—the Christian religion and the Roman imperium were both taking shape—but one whose life we can know in great detail. W. P. Crozier was the editor of the *Manchester Guardian* by vocation. His avocation was the study of this period, which resulted in two novels, "The Letters of Pontius Pilate," published twenty years ago (which I have not read), and the present one published posthumously this year. If he was not so skillful a novelist as Robert Graves in "I, Claudius," he was thoroughly at home in the period and able to make it come alive. The plot is a simple one but it brings his Roman family of senatorial rank into Roman imperial politics—Sejanus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius and Pontius Pilate all play a part—and creates a living panorama of the Mediterranean world, from villas in Antium and houses in Rome to Alexandria and Damascus, with Roman aristocrats of the best and worst types, imperial administrators, Greek soothsayers and freed men, philosophers, slaves, magistrates, merchants, Jews and Christians. Mr. Crozier writes of the early Christians without any special religious interest; indeed he treats all his characters with a wry humor that is rather engaging. The novel was finished before Mussolini met his end. But as one reads the story of the fall of Sejanus and Caligula, one feels again that the more Italian life changes, the more it remains the same.

E. P. RICHARDSON.

Struggling Upward, and other works. Horatio Alger, Jr. Crown. $3.00.

WHAT were the elements which for years made the Alger books so widely beloved in this country? If the four stories included in this volume are any criterion there were many handicaps. The success formula gets terribly monotonous; Alger characters are wooden and their comments stilted; he labors the obvious; extraordinary coincidence often saves the day; the material rewards for ambition implemented by honest toil surpass belief. On the other hand "rags to riches" coincided exactly with the dreams of so many Americans, especially young, in the glittering days of "rugged individualism." Alger was also strong on plot and action. He lived for thirty years in a newsboys lodging house. And indeed his stories still have enough "go" to them to exercise great powers of attraction even for adults. It is a frightening thought that today "Jed the Poorhouse Boy" has been supplanted by "Dick Tracy."

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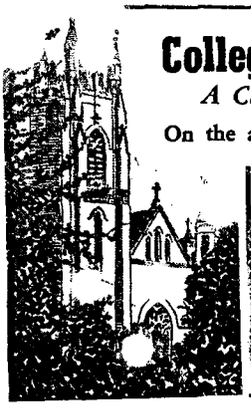

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The Inner Forum

NCWC War Relief

IN THE past two years and more War Relief Services-NCWC, which is a participating member of the National War Fund, has been operating in forty-four countries throughout the world. It has given special attention to the care of refugees, notably the "stateless and destitute" in England, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, Africa and widely dispersed areas in the Far East. It has set up welfare programs for Polish refugees in Egypt, Iran, Italy, Mexico, India, North and East Africa and other regions. All told, War Relief Services of the National Catholic Welfare Conference have established more than 150 welfare centers which at present render assistance to some 6,000,000 people.

Much of this work of mercy is carried out in some of the most distant quarters of the globe. In war-torn China NCWC has collaborated with the Chinese Catholic Medical Service and the Chinese Catholic Cultural Association. Medical aid has been rendered to numbers of homeless migrants at hospitals, dispensaries, leper colonies and orphanages. In Algeria and Tunisia it was the White Fathers and White Sisters of Africa who collaborated with NCWC in bringing aid to all victims regardless of race, nationality or creed.

In the clothing campaign which was conducted in forty-two dioceses of the United States more than 5,000,000 pounds of new and used garments were collected for war victims in Italy. While the campaign sponsored by American bishops, clergy and laity in more than a hundred dioceses brought together more than 15,000,000 pounds of clothing for the war victims in the liberated countries of Europe. Some 600 refugees were fully or partially supported here in the United States. And much was done for prisoners of war of both the Allied and Axis countries held in England, the Continent of Europe, Africa, the Far East, Canada and the United States.

The National Council of Catholic Women recently provided the NCWC War Relief Services with 20,000 articles of clothing for destitute women and children in the devastated Philippines. Two additional projects now in process involve the gathering of more clothing for the same purpose and still more for destitute Sisters and their child charges in Europe, China and the Philippines. During the past year this agency, which had its headquarters in the Empire State Building in New York, has shipped abroad more than 10,000,000 articles for impoverished war victims.

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